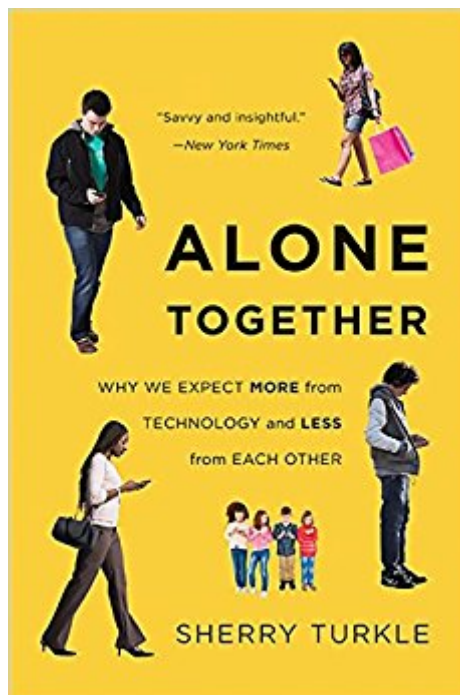**The book was found**

Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology And Less From Each Other

Synopsis

Technology has become the architect of our intimacies. Online, we fall prey to the illusion of companionship, gathering thousands of Twitter and Facebook friends, and confusing tweets and wall posts with authentic communication. But this relentless connection leads to a deep solitude. MIT professor Sherry Turkle argues that as technology ramps up, our emotional lives ramp down. Based on hundreds of interviews and with a new introduction taking us to the present day, Alone Together describes changing, unsettling relationships between friends, lovers, and families.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. As the digital age sparks increasing debate about what new technologies and increased connectivity are doing to our brains, comes this chilling examination of what our iPods and iPads are doing to our relationships from MIT professor Turkle (Simulation and Its Discontents). In this third in a trilogy that explores the relationship between humans and technology, Turkle argues that people are increasingly functioning without face-to-face contact. For all the talk of convenience and connection derived from texting, e-mailing, and social networking, Turkle reaffirms that what humans still instinctively need is each other, and she encounters dissatisfaction and alienation among users: teenagers whose identities are shaped not by self-exploration but by how they are perceived by the online collective, mothers who feel texting makes communicating with their children more frequent yet less substantive, Facebook users who feel shallow status updates devalue the true intimacies of friendships. Turkle 's prescient book makes a strong case that what was meant to be a way to facilitate communications has pushed people closer to their machines

and further away from each other. (Jan.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

With the recent explosion of increasingly sophisticated cell-phone technology and social networking websites like Twitter and Facebook, a casual observer might understandably conclude that human relationships are blossoming like never before. But according to MIT science professor Turkle, that assumption would be sadly wrong. In the third and final volume of a trilogy dissecting the interface between humans and technology, Turkle suggests that we seem determined to give human qualities to objects and content to treat each other as things. In her university-sponsored studies surveying everything from text-message usage among teens to the use of robotic baby seals in nursing homes for companionship, Turkle paints a sobering and paradoxical portrait of human disconnectedness in the face of expanding virtual connections in cell-phone, intelligent machine, and Internet usage. Despite her reliance on research observations, Turkle emphasizes personal stories from computer gadgetryÃ¢â¬â„¢s front lines, which keeps her prose engaging and her message to the human speciesÃ¢â¬â •to restrain ourselves from becoming technologyÃ¢â¬â„¢s willing slaves instead of its guiding mastersÃ¢â¬â •loud and clear. --Carl Hays --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Sherry Turkle is an ethnographer of technology, which means that she observes people interacting with technology and interviews them about it in order to understand the meaning of that technology to usersÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢ lives. SheÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢s also a psychologist, concerned with holistic human wellbeing. Alone Together relies on her ethnographic observations to understand the ways that new technologiesÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â •specifically, companionable robots and the always-connected-wireless worldÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â •are affecting interpersonal relationships. Her writing, although not directly citing their work, continues in the tradition of Marshall McLuhan and Neil Postman in asking questions like, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Å"How do new technologies affect their users? What are the ideologies inherent to technologies? And how can users consciously choose which ideologies to adopt and promote and which to reject?ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Â•Alone Together is divided into two parts. The first looks at companionable software and hardware and argues that we lose something relationally important and meaningful when we create machines to substitute for people in providing care and companionship, especially for children and the elderly. The section includes discussions on artificial intelligence and machine emotions. Turkle argues that machines cannot ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Å"feelÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Â• emotions like human beings but rather can only imitate their

expression to arouse emotions in us. She asks what that performance of emotion really means in comparison to the human, embodied expression of emotion, especially empathy. Turkle suggest that we should be concerned when we come to prefer the company of technology to that of people and when we rely on technology to assuage our negative feelings of guilt, loneliness, etc., for example in leaving our elderly parents in nursing homes.The book's second section explores how the always connected world affects interpersonal relationships. I found this part of the book more meaningful than the first, as the discussion on robotics didn't touch my life personally much. I suspect the same will be true for many readers. Turkle, a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), lives in an environment on the technological cutting edge that is permeated by robotics to a greater extent than the environments in which many live.The second section of Alone Together analyzes how texting has replaced in-person communication and phone calls in many contexts. Turkle points out that texting promotes brief factual exchanges but not deeper interaction, allowing texters to create barriers to communication and share selectively. Likewise, Turkle explores Facebook and social media in general as spheres for identity development that allow for some experimentation but that also cause intense anxiety for users as they worry about how others will see them online and how that vision will impact real-world interactions. Facebook becomes for many a place of performance, selective sharing, and tension, rather than of depth and meaningful interaction. The second section of the book also looks at online lives (Second Life, World of Warcraft, etc.) and how those lives provide places of escape from the real world. Turkle shares stories about gamers whose fast paced, exciting digital worlds have replaced aspects of their slower real worlds, including one man prefers his Second Life wife to his physically-present wife and kids. The discussion is disturbing and hit home for me, as I know people who spent years playing WoW.Alone Together's overall theme is that we need to consciously consider the effects of new technologies on our lives and then pick and choose what we want to adopt, rather than simply accepting technologies without thinking. Turkle isn't a Luddite, and this isn't a book against new technology. Turkle sees the value of new connective technologies and discusses her integration of those technologies into her relationship with her daughter. Rather than an attack on new technology, Turkle's work provides the basis for personal reflection on what technologies provide, but also on what they take away if we're not careful. I think that's an important discussion, which is why I highly recommend Turkle's work.A couple caveats to conclude. One of the pitfalls of ethnography as a way of understanding the world is that it necessarily relies on small but deeply-studied groups of

people. ItÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢s debatable about how generalizable ethnographic findings are. For example, in the section on robotics, Turkle focuses heavily on her university, MIT, and its work with robots. Living as she does in a highly educated and technologically literate part of the country, some of her findings might not be applicable to those living in areas with limited access to robotics and generally lower education levels. Likewise, although Turkle shares stories from a wide variety of people, she spends quite a bit of time on primary, private high school, and college students, as well as the elderly. Those demographics and their experiences with technology might not be reflective of the wider US population. In the same line of thought, Turkle doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢t spend much time on how culture might affect technology use. But that wasnÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢t really her goal, so itÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢s not a knock on what is an important contribution. ItÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢s just an area for further study.

Sherry Turkle's, Alone Together, has a wide agenda relating to human--technology interfaces, relationships, congruities and, quite often, dismal vulnerabilities of the mechanical, technological and human kind. It's a cocktail of technological history, research findings, personal experiences, reflections and discussion that is overwhelmingly rueful about technology's influences in our lives. The subtitle of the book--Why we expect more from technology and less from each other?--is as intriguing as it is loaded. The assumption seems to be that "we" do indeed expect more from technology than we do of each other and that the very essence of humanity is under threat or question as a result. These are dark considerations and are arguably further grist brought to the sceptics' mill.Alone Together is divided into two main sections: PART ONE--THE ROBOTIC MOMENT--IN SOLITUDE, NEW INTIMACIES and PART TWO--NETWORKED--IN INTIMACY, NEW SOLITUDES. Clearly, there's an observable and obvious tension here. This book is about the affordances of technology (how these cut both ways, positively and negatively, depending on who and what is involved, and under which particular circumstances) and competing priorities. To generalise, each of Turkle's anecdotes, data snippets and theoretical musings serve to demonstrate that technology, media and our artefacts empower and enhance but they also reverse and obsolesce simultaneously. There is nothing new here and we shouldn't be shocked or surprised; McLuhan's four laws of media gave us the necessary heads up 30 years ago!In Part 1, Turkle reviews her research into how children and adults use and relate to robots and other sociable technological devices. Turkle discusses "artificial emotion" and is justifiably concerned about children "getting comfortable with the idea that a robot's companionship is even close to a replacement for a person." (65) She continues: "Dependence on a robot presents itself as risk free.

But when one becomes accustomed to "companionship" without demands, life with people may seem overwhelming. Dependence on a person is risky--it makes us subject to rejection--but it also opens us to deeply knowing another." (66)The topic of the cost of technological immersion is explored and expanded in Part 2. The benefits of continual connectivity are well-rehearsed but again Turkle is somewhat regretful. She admits: "I check my e-mail first thing in the morning and before going to bed at night. I have come to learn that informing myself about new professional problems and demands is not a good way to start or end my day, but my practice unhappily continues." (154) Me too.For Turkle, THE TETHERED SELF is always on, connected and conflicted: "Networked, we are together, but so lessened are our expectations of each other that we feel utterly alone. And there is a risk that we come to see others as objects to be accessed--and only for the parts we find useful, comforting, or amusing." (154) Further, "These days, being connected depends not on our distance from each other but from available communications technology. ... In fact, being alone can start to seem like a precondition for being together because it is easier to communicate if you can focus, without interruption, on your screen." (155)Turkle's distress, disdain and fear of technology then turns variously towards the use of laptops by students ("I notice, along with several of my colleagues, that the students whose laptops are open in class do not do as well as the others." (163)), email, instant messaging, Facebook, MySpace and Skype ("I have downloaded Skype and am ready for its unforgiving stare." (297)). Overall, she concludes, "... the connected life encourages us to treat those we meet online in something of the same way we treat objects--with dispatch." (168)So, why is it that we expect more from technology and less from each other? The answer to this question needs to be pieced together carefully and is Janus-faced. Technology connects and provides essential and necessary distance from potentially prying parents (173) and peers. (174) Technology is non-judgemental and value-free, and functions as a refuge for those who feel cast off. (178) It can also allow young people to explore and craft identity. Yet, social media can be sites of cruelty and pressure; they can be superficial and performance-based only. Texts demand answers and phone calls are perceived as invasive and time-consuming. In short, social media can overwhelm, isolate, reduce, fudge, separate, perturb, preoccupy, betray and beguile. "We go online because we are busy but end up spending more time with technology and less with each other. We defend connectivity as a way to be close, even as we effectively hide from each other." (281)For Turkle, "... we transgress not because we try to build the new but because we don't allow ourselves to consider what it disrupts or diminishes. We are not in trouble because of invention but because we think it will solve everything." (284)The question of what we might do if Turkle is right about expecting less of each other is vexing. Turkle sees the need--prompted by the

disturbing presence and effects of technology--to ask how it might serve our human purposes and even reconsider what these purposes might (or ought to) be. (285). She concludes: "We don't need to reject or disparage technology. We need to put it in its place." (295) Yes, Amen to that.For me, Turkle's book goes to show one thing above all else. We're living increasingly in a world that's lost its bearings. In the absence of a grounded, principled moral and ethical compass, humanity has allowed technology to fill a large void we've created and sustain for ourselves--often unwittingly. What we now need is apology, thanksgiving, forgiveness and love. (cf. 304)

I tend to read anything by Sherry Turkle - her thoughts often leave me with more questions than answers, an aspect of reading and learning that I adore! True confessions, I tend to see technological advances as 'progress.' Does it seem to you that we readily (eagerly?) adopt technology into our lives with little consideration for the personal, emotional, relational, and ethical impact? Turkle calls us to slow down, reflect, and consider the impacts of technology particularly our emotional, relational, communicative, and connective lives. What is gained? What is lost? What might be the impacts be? Are the naysayers chicken little, the sky is falling or are there truly some negative aspects of technology adoption that warrant further consideration? Topics explored include: intimacy, solitude, communion, companionship, anxiety, betrayal, connectedness, disconnectedness, multitasking, separation, identity, and personal development.My favorite chapters: Ch9, Growing Up Tethered discussed young people, their personal development, and the impact of living "in a state of waiting for connection" (p. 171). I laughed out loud at Ch10's No Need to Call describing how annoying(laugh) a telephone call can be given its immediacy and immediate demand for our attention.Read this book also: Baym, N. K. (2010). Personal connections in the digital age. Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity.

Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other Spiritual Activation: Why Each of Us Does Make the Difference (Why Each of Us Does Makes the Difference) What to Expect the Second Year: From 12 to 24 Months (What to Expect (Workman Publishing)) What to Expect When Mommy's Having a Baby (What to Expect Kids) What to Expect at Preschool (What to Expect Kids) What to Expect When You're Expecting (What to Expect (Workman Publishing)) iGen: Why TodayÃ¢â¬â„¢s Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy--and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood--and What That Means for the Rest of Us How to Grow More Vegetables, Ninth Edition: (and Fruits, Nuts, Berries, Grains, and Other Crops) Than You Ever Thought Possible on Less Land with Less Water Than

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